



the balmain
association
incorporated
news sheet

The Peninsula OBSERVER

Vol 42 No 3 Issue 304

Founded November 1965

September 2007

Meeting with Verity Firth MP

On Friday June 15 representatives of the Balmain Association Committee met with Verity Firth to discuss heritage and planning issues on the Balmain peninsula. It was pointed out that Balmain has a very important place in the history of Sydney and Australia, not just because it was the cradle of the ALP but also because of its industrial and working-class past and because there are many buildings over 100 years old and some buildings remain which are almost 200 years old. Balmain's buildings and streetscapes survived the development ravages of Kirribilli and Drummoyne largely because of its industrial/working class background and because of the efforts of councillors Nick Origlass and Issy Wyner who recognized and fought for planning regulations to conserve Balmain's heritage.

The Balmain Association's concerns were that in the previous two decades the loss of industry and the "gentrification" of Balmain have resulted in huge pressures on Leichhardt Council from developers, the State Government and the Land and Environment Court to allow demolitions, developments and renovations which are often out of character with the area (Louisa Road is a prime example of this) and that very soon Balmain will no longer be attractive to tourist and residents alike. The Balmain Association, together with the Council, successfully fought three attempts by a previous State Government to take over planning powers from the Council and rezone the old industrial sites in the late 1980s and early 1990s. However the efforts to control inappropriate small-scale developments have been less successful and Balmain heritage is in danger of

suffering death by a thousand cuts, just when it is being recognized for its unique features, features that are fast disappearing.

While the Association realizes that there must be some renewal of the suburb or it may suffer in the longer term, it was put to Verity that there needs to be better administration of the planning instruments, more notice taken of Development Control Plans, such as DCP 21 (which was developed to save Wharf Road from a similar fate to Louisa Road), by both Council and the Land and Environment Court. It is perceived that the L&E Court is not always consistent in its rulings and that Council cannot afford to defend many cases taken to the L&E Court as vigorously as it needs to. It was suggested to Verity that a percentage of stamp duty revenue received by the State Government should be passed on to councils to assist them with better and more effective planning administration and control. Another suggestion was that Council be permitted to use planning procedures similar to those used in San Francisco. In San Francisco the number of development applications in a particular area is limited in a given time and only the best development proposals are approved even though others may meet the planning conditions. Verity agreed to investigate these issues and indicated that recent appointments to the L & E Court may indicate a change in the direction the Association wishes to see.

Verity also agreed to seek State Government funding for the purchase of waterfront land that Council has identified as being important for public access and to link up existing parks and walkways. She pointed out that there were possible sources of funding for history markers, such as the one about Cockatoo Island that has recently been installed in the park beside Fitzroy

Avenue, and she would investigate these for the Association. Verity will also investigate why it is taking so long for Public Works approve work to start on replacing some of the stonework in the Watch House. Finally, Verity offered to ensure that the Association's walks brochures, Watch House opening times and other information of interest to visitors was available through the Department of Tourism's website and other relevant State Government organizations.

While there did not appear to be much Verity could contribute on some of the planning issues we raised the hour-long meeting was a very satisfactory beginning to what we hope will be a fruitful collaboration.



Watch House Outlook

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BALLAST POINT – ITS LEGAL LEGACY

As reported in the Sydney Morning Herald on 2 November 1951, Edward Ankar Olsen was fined £25 with costs of £4/14s for being the Master of the SS Wagon Mound, a vessel from which oil escaped into Mort Bay on 30 October 1951. At the time of the oil spill the Wagon Mound was berthed at Ballast Point. The SMH also contained a report and photograph with the headline, "Men leap for life when blazing oil engulfs ship".

The sea-borne oil had burned slowly for a few minutes, then burst into a wall of flames which swept through the timber Shearlegs Wharf lying six feet above the water. The heat exploded steel "bottles" of acetylene gas being used by workmen on the wharf and on the *Corrimal* (a ship which was undergoing an extensive refit at the Morts Dock and Engineering Coy Ltd) with pieces of the shattered containers falling back onto the wharf and the ship, like shrapnel, and fragments piercing the steel sides of the ship. Those men on the *Corrimal* able to do so jumped to the wharf and fled through blinding smoke with flames only a few feet behind and dozens of them, oblivious to cuts and scratches, scaled a six-foot iron fence topped with barbed wire. Others on the *Corrimal*, unable to escape to the wharf, jumped to the lighter, the *Audrey D*, which was unloading equipment alongside the *Corrimal*. The master of the *Audrey D*, Captain David Bloxham of Pyrmont, and the crew, were offloading a new funnel for the *Corrimal* when the fire swept over the collier and caught the wooden mast of the *Audrey D*. The crew cleared the lines and two passing tugs took her in tow, mast ablaze, down harbour to the Goat Island fire-float base.

Three fire-floats from the Goat Island base went to the dock to assist sixty firemen from eight brigades fighting the fire. The flames charred a section approximately 200 feet long by 50 feet wide of the timber wharf and destroyed seven welding sets valued at £600 each on the wharf and twisted and buckled steel estimated to value thousands of pounds. Fortunately the firemen on the wharf and the fire-floats prevented the fire spreading to a nearby store containing machinery worth

£1,000,000. The cost of the damage was estimated at £50,000.

The *Corrimal's* refit for its coal merchant owners, RW Miller & Coy, which had commenced in February, was to have been completed by the end of the year. NJ Middleton, the Marine Superintendent for RW Miller, said "The fire almost destroyed all the work we have put into her since February."

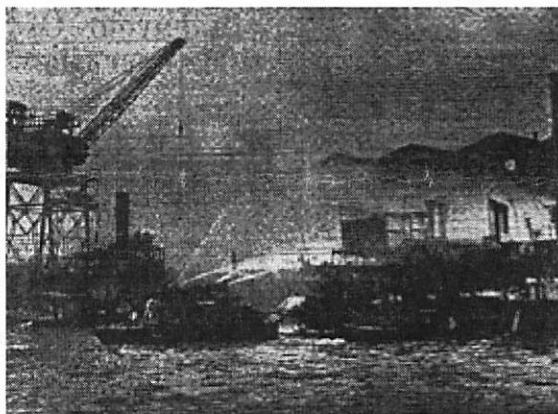


Photo from the SMH, 2 Nov. 1951

Captain Olsen and his ship SS *Wagon Mound* had weighed anchor and departed Sydney Harbour at 11.56 am on Tuesday, 30 October, two days before his case was heard and fifty hours before the fire that engulfed the Shearlegs Wharf and the ships *Corrimal* and *Audrey D*. The aftermath of Captain Olsen's stay of less than 26 hours in Sydney Harbour remained before the courts for the next fourteen-and-a-half years, and involved two appeals to the Privy Council and a total of 84 gilt-edged pages of the *Lloyd's Law Reports* — 54 hearing days in the five times it went to court — and give new meaning to negligence in the English legal system.

In one of the court cases Mr Parkin, the manager of the plaintiff company Morts Dock and Engineering Coy Ltd, gave evidence that he had arrived at work at 8 am on the morning of 30 October, whereupon he saw large quantities of heavy oil on the water and congealed on the sides of the ships and the wharf piles. He was sufficiently concerned about the outbreak of fire that he ordered the cessation of welding until further order and telephoned Mr Durack, the Caltex manager, on BW 8471. Mr Durack came over to the plaintiff's premises at about 10 am and assured him that further work, including

welding, was safe. Reassured, Mr Parkin directed the resumption of work which thereafter continued through the Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. Parkin continued his testimony: he was in his office at about 2 pm on Thursday 1 November when Mr Durack telephoned. Mr Durack was seeking permission to return to the worksite and wished to bring along another person to inspect the damage to the plaintiff's

premises. At this stage it appears that Mr Durack fully accepted responsibility for the damage, which was confined to fouling and congealed oil. Continuing, Mr Parkin told the court that before he could respond to Durack's request, Mr Durack exclaimed over the telephone: "Good Lord, your place has gone up in flames!"

The Wagon Mound case is a significant case in the law of negligence in the Westminster legal system. In 1951 during Caltex's operation of the Ballast Point site, the 'Wagon Mound' ship was berthed at Ballast Point filling up its bunkers with fuel-oil. Two separate cases were heard in relation to this incident at the Privy Council in England. One action involved Morts Dock and after its liquidation the second case was brought by RW Miller, the owner of the *Corrimal*. As a result of the cases, the way the law of negligence acts changed in relation to the types of injury for which a person may be liable. Before the Wagon Mound cases the determining factor in whether there was negligence was whether the action (or inaction) taken, which caused damage or injury, could be considered to be that of an ordinary man (a man on the Clapham omnibus). After the Wagon Mound cases negligence was determined on the basis of what action a reasonable person, in a similar position and circumstances, would take. This change may well be the most important and enduring legacy of the industrialization of Ballast Point.

References

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DEPRESSION RECOLLECTIONS

My father came to Australia from Scotland, after the mines were closing down. My mother, aged 26, came from England, following her 18 year-old brother, after her mother died. Mum and Dad met on board the ship coming here. Dad was able to buy a mixed business in Rozelle when they married.

The business my dad bought in 1928 was on the corner of Mansfield and Moore Streets. It was a thriving business depending largely on business from a timber mill nearby. I remember my mother telling me that they closed their shop and took me in to see the opening of the Sydney Harbour Bridge. The shop at the corner of Mullens and Mansfield Streets was previously a grocer's shop. We moved there in 1936. Mum and Dad's business was a mixed business - sweets, ice cream, groceries and fruit and vegetables.

When the depression came the timber mill closed down. Mum and Dad persevered and were down to their last £20. They used some of this money to undertake a confectionary and chocolate making course.

Because they had a shop, Mum and Dad were not entitled to the "dole", so they made their sweets and set up a travelling shop consisting of a pram with a glass case on it. Mum sold sweets to the children before school started and at lunchtime at Gladstone Park Public School. When school went in she went to a cake shop in Darling Street and stocked up with cream buns, etc to sell at the morning-tea break at what was then known as "Lever Bros".

At a *Back to Balmain* reunion a few years ago, one of my fellow classmates told me how he used to save up and buy toffees (which I remember were in little paper cups) for a penny. He also told me that my parents were mentioned in *The Peninsula Observer* under, "My School Days - 1927-36". The article mentioned that some schools had a tuck shop selling lollies and a penny drink at playtime and at lunchtime; that children never bought their lunch as they could not afford it; that you always went home for lunch if you lived close by; that the 'Pigeon Ground' school supplied a huge cane basket for the safekeeping of the lunches children brought from home; and that outside the school, before and after lessons, a man and his wife operated a stand, consisting of a small wooden and glass case on an old converted pram, selling homemade toffees of excellent quality (in colours of red, green and yellow) in paper patty pans for 1/2 or 1 penny.

For many years I have meant to contact the *Peninsula Observer* and tell them that the man and his wife were my parents, Bob and Mabel Andrew.

Mavis McGregor (nee Andrew)

Dear Councillor

Thank you for dropping down to look at this old wall the other day. I am grateful to bring this part of Balmain to Council's attention.

No doubt you had a glance at the deciduous Boston Ivy plant clinging gamely to the wall. It has survived so many winters, fought the voracious root system of the ash trees and dug its way through rock and rubble to the stage where it now looks after itself... despite unhelpful attention from passers by. As you saw, it is growing on top of the wall where it gets the sun and is shunning the shady side of the wall. I chose Boston Ivy as it adheres by way of tiny suckers which will not damage the wall and it makes an attractive cover such as on my own house across the road.

My initial request was to see if Council would be prepared to husband the creeper and replace the lattice, which is now being slowly demolished. I actually planted the vine many years ago and put in the yellow pipe at its base and the lattice too. There were two vines to begin with, but when the lower one succumbed to the tree roots from the tree nearby and passers-by vandalised the lattice I am afraid I gave up my attempts to beautify the wall. Nevertheless the one ivy left does survive, albeit it threatened.

Look, I have done a lot of fostering of that particular piece of Cameron Street and I wonder if we might get some help from Council at this point?

Once upon a time my wife and I planted all the gum trees, the wattles and the understorey in what was then the Mort Bay foundry site, when it was being used as a film studio. We did this with the help of the owner, John Morton, who managed the film studio. He paid for, and we bought and planted, native tube stock from Cumberland Forest Nursery. All the 'original' trees (now mature) on Site C were planted by us since 1974 when we moved into our house.

I tried to put in little street gardens beneath the two white cedar trees too: dug out the rocks, mattocked the soil, dug in lime and fertiliser, put in the wooden surrounds. Geraniums and kangaroo paw were planted because they seemed to handle the street environment.

Well, tree roots soon strangled the plants and stopped that. I dug out the roots, removed the soil, put in a layer of plastic, put good soil back and started over again. All this with watering daily using a watering can or stretching hose across Cameron Street from my place through several summers.

But it did not work either. Tree roots stopped anything growing at their base. They are voracious and no wonder when you see what they are growing in: compacted rock, dry rubble and bitumen. The plants have gone, the wooden squares still surround the trees and even the empty beds with their ground level fences look better than the degraded footpath.

Several times I have removed graffiti paint from the fence at my own expense.

When Council so expansively and beautifully developed Site C, I asked Alex Hunter of Environmental Partnership, who oversaw research and development of Site C, several times if we could get one or two peep holes in the fence, as you might see on a building site. I just felt it would upgrade the area. I still think it would upgrade the area. But you can see that it did not get done. I expect budget could not go that far. But while Site C flourishes over the fence, this side is blank and oppressive.

Now I am not complaining, but I do wonder if Council would consider this stretch of Cameron Street, from Phillip Street to McKell Avenue on the Bay (north east) side of the road. Look, it is a depressed area. We get abandoned cars, unused boats on trailers (last one was there for eight years, never used) and heavy vehicles like to park there nights and weekends. Old trailers love it. It attracts dumped cars.

Do you or Council think anything could be done about this stretch of Cameron Street?

My argument is that it just looks so forlorn and abandoned. It does nothing for the neighbourhood and attracts the wrong element. The three houses opposite (88 Church, 32 Cameron and 105 Phillip Street) have all made efforts to raise the standard of the streetscape and even on the other side of the road (as described).

Could we please get some help from Council? Could you please put it up for discussion? I await your response with anticipation,

Yours sincerely,

David Liddle



The Cameron Street wall

Tea With Roger Parkes

How do you like it? Strong, milk, no sugar.
Where were brought up? I was born in North Shore Hospital and lived in rented accommodation in Willoughby and Mosman for six years. In 1946 my parents moved Castlecrag.

Where have you worked and lived? Most of my working life was with Qantas. I worked in London, Port Morsby, San Francisco, Geneva, and Athens before returning to Sydney in 1983 with my wife and daughter.

Why did you decide to live in Balmain? In 1968 I bought a house in Glebe but my wife refused to live there when we returned to Australia so we moved to Balmain as that was the closest thing to Glebe that was acceptable. I wanted to be able to walk to work but going by ferry was an acceptable compromise (There used to be a private ferry service operating from Yeend Street wharf that I used.) and I wanted to be near the action of the city. The North Shore suburbs were frightening and stultifying. The communal society I knew at Castlecrag had disappeared when the new money moved in.

What are the most enjoyable things about living in Balmain? Looking out over the harbour and being able to catch a bus into the heart of the best city in the world and arrive in the city centre in 10 minutes.

Would you consider moving out of Balmain under any circumstances? Not really but if I did it would be because I couldn't afford to live here anymore. As new money moves into Balmain it puts pressure on the council to approve higher building

densities and rates. While this might not affect me directly it means my daughters will never be able to afford to live here and neighbouring properties are redeveloped with a loss of amenity, views and sense of community.



Where would you move to? Dunno; the Blue Mountains maybe.

What changes would you like to see in Balmain? I would like a cinema here. There used to be several. There used to be more music played and more varied music. The local music society, Music 2041, had wound up by 1990. The schools could provide more opportunity for playing music. A bit more philanthropy: people putting more back into the community, a "we" rather than a "me" attitude. We are in danger of becoming a rich ghetto; we need more public housing for people on low wages who work in the city. AWAs should not be used in Balmain, or anywhere else for that matter. I would like to see people walk more in Balmain. If people

drive they don't get to meet their neighbours and they make it unsafe for others to walk.

What advice would you give to new arrivals in Balmain? Join groups that want to preserve the values that exist here. Join the Balmain Association, for instance, to protect the area's heritage values and record its history. Fight to uphold the high reputation of local schools and discourage parents from sending their children to schools, outside Balmain, to be indoctrinated with warped values. Mix with the locals in the Balmain Rugby League Club, the oldest club of its kind, and swim at the Dawn Fraser pool. Learn to become a Balmainiac.

Are historical activities disappearing in Balmain? Certainly. Most of the industry on the peninsula has gone. Snails Bay used to be lined with boat building and repair yards. Now there is only one working yard left; Fountains. Unless there is proactive action taken soon it too will be redeveloped and the loss will be everyone's except the developer's. Second hand bookshops and furniture stores have been replaced with cafes, restaurants and expensive clothes stores. The proposed Multiplex and Tigers developments will accentuate this trend.

What does the future hold for Balmain? Very little unless residents make it clear, to Leichhardt Council and the State Government, what they want. This must be done through organizations such as the Balmain Association, the Ballast Point Campaign Committee and Friends of Callan Park if it is to be effective. We saved Balmain Hospital, the Watch House, Clontarf, part of Mort Bay and all of Ballast Point. There is plenty more to do.

Another cup? No thanks

BOOK LAUNCH

On Friday 8 June Verity Firth launched Garry McDougall's novel, *"Belonging"*, at the Balmain Watch House. Below is the text of Verity's speech. *"Belonging"* is a "photo novel" published by Hightor Trading, Belmore, Australia, 2007. (Ed.)

In the past few weeks, there have been many times that I've felt a bit like Dr Louis Gabriel, the pioneering medico, early photographer, and fascinating hero of Garry McDougall's *'Belonging'*.

Like Dr Gabriel, I've recently spent a lot of my time fighting for modern medicine. For him, this meant striving for better standards of basic hygiene, the development of modern medications, and the use of new, sometimes controversial treatments.

Today many of the developments that people like Dr Gabriel fought for have resulted in a standard of healthcare that we take for granted. Nevertheless, pioneering techniques and unorthodox ways of thinking still have the ability to provoke controversy, discussion, and opposition, as the recent debate over stem cell research in NSW Parliament aptly demonstrates. As Garry

makes clear in his book, many things have changed in life and in medicine since the days of Dr Gabriel – but many things have stayed the same.

Belonging A photo novel



A PASSIONATE TALE BASED ON GUNBAGAI'S BLACK DOCTOR

G. McDougall

Unlike Dr Gabriel, I think it's safe to say that I am not a scientist, and never will be. My grandfather, Victor Burgmann, was the chairman of the CSIRO, and I've often said that his interest in science must have skipped a generation. However, in the past few weeks, I've come to learn that there is something incredibly exciting about being a pioneer in any field – especially the field

of medical science. There's so much to be learned, and plenty more to be achieved.

I've realised that people enter politics and medicine for the same reason – to help people to live a better and more useful life. I've also come to understand, as I think Dr Gabriel did, that there is a certain beauty in science. It becomes very difficult to look at anything in quite the same way again. It strikes me that this is a trait shared not only by pioneers, but by artists – the ability to see something differently, and to encourage us to see things from a new perspective.

In addition to his skills at writing and painting, Garry is well known as a seasoned traveller, and I'm sure his travels have taught him the same thing. Once you have been overseas, it's impossible to see your own home in the same way. You become a tourist in your own town, able to appreciate things you had never even noticed before.

This quality is reflected in Dr Gabriel's photography, and I can understand why Garry has found it such an inspiration. I'll let you enjoy Dr Gabriel's photos and Garry's wonderful story for yourselves – but enjoy it you most certainly will.

A POETRY PAGE

Of the poems below the first was originally published in The Observer in 1989. After Issy Wyner's article on Clontarf Cottage in the previous issue of The Observer, republishing it seems appropriate. Christina Ritchie enriches this issue with Glimpses and the third poet needs no introduction. Ed.

Clontarf Before Restoration 1988

Reaching South from the ridge to Johnson's Bay
Sheriff Blake's home speculation estate lay:
Eleven sandstone cottages did grace the land,
Ruined Clontarf one of five that still stand.

The land was scarred, and lost the cockatoo,
Gone the gums and wattles, gone the kangaroo;
And the Architect Bibb's Georgian lines took shape
In timber and stone on a cleared landscape.

'Twas Soldier Blake who gave the house the name
Of Ireland's battlefield of ancient fame
Where died King Bryan in defeating the Dane
At Clontarf, where ten thousand men were slain.

There stands the house, or what remains today:
Crumbling standstone, timbers burnt or in decay,
Imprisoned by confining barbed wire plaits
Its grounds submerged 'neath pensioner flats.

Land once pledged to the people for open space,
Clandestinely filched — a lasting disgrace.
But goodwill and friendship long abiding
For the under-privileged in flats residing.

Ruthless government and its bureaucracy
And a council that shunned democracy,
Joined forces to pilfer the people's park,
A place where children could romp and lark.

Then these powers-that-be with evil intent
Sought their deed to conceal, turn aside discontent
With crocodile tears 'midst the uproar
By claiming concern for the homeless poor.

But this ruse to cover a shoddy act
On people betrayed had no impact:
Why steal land, spend needed funds, on a few new flats,
With Glebe renewals half-done, left to the rats?

At election time, people's anger was clear,
Open council replaced the insincere.
Now work has begun to establish a shrine
Of people's power against the Philistine.

And those who rose to demonstrate and strive
And struggle strongly to keep the park alive,
Now labour at the task of restoration
Of the house that stands sadly in isolation.

They labour mightily to clear and clean,
Removing the vandal's work that did demean,
And the old house, now bereft of its roof,
Stands mutely defiant and proudly aloof.

Its chequered career soon will come to an end
When skills of craftsmen and volunteers mend
The havoc that foundries and vandals have wrought
And restore the lines that the architect caught.

Issy Wyner

Glimpses

From a cottage canvas
Rusted brown by an age of learning
Peeping from the undergrowth
Of vine and bended gum trunk
Twisted hard against sandstone
Brick and ironcast, reflections play
On the curves and bows of stressed
Relief, gravity pulling at the shapely
Contours of a builder's dream
We see glimpses of an era steeped
In workhouse squalor, coal dust lingering
In dark alcoves, soap bouquets wafting
About the dim-lit attic walls
Noises of today assault our ears like
The thousand sleepless night times
Etched in a tired worker's memory.

Harbour vistas glorify the city 'scape
White Bay glistens in the autumn sunlight
O that we could stand on the foreshore
Wander daily on the gentle slopes as
Ferries pull in at ease, unloading
Friends and visitors to welcoming
Hearths of family and pubs of fame
Instead wharves flat and angular
Cut hard against the hillside, starkly
Threatening a new industrial era
High walls of metal, built face barriers
Blotting out the viewlines, cutting
Deep into the psyche of passing
Well-wishers gazing on the wonder
Of our treasured harbourside.

A future beckons, vision splendid soaring
On clean fresh air as ferries call again
With the laughter of playful children
Their shadows mingling in the evening glow
We walk in the pathway lined with gold
And fear the black dawn drawn with the stroke
Of a politician's hovering pen.
Blue green the vista of our harbourland
Grey walls the legacy of myopic men
When whispers fall on deafened ears

Shout loud and drown the sound of power

The harbour shimmers and the glorious
Glimpses are the promises we dare to keep.

Christina Ritchie

Hamlet's Cat's Soliloquy

To go outside, and there perchance to stay
Or to remain within: that is the question
Whether 'tis better for a cat to suffer
The cuffs and buffets of inclement weather
That Nature rains on those who roam
abroad,
Or take a nap upon a scrap of carpet,
And so by dozing melt the solid hours
That clog the clock's bright gears with sullen
time
And stall the dinner bell. To sit, to stare
Outdoors, and by a stare to seem to state
A wish to venture forth without delay,
Then when the portal's opened up, to stand
As if transfixed by doubt. To prowl; to
sleep;
To choose not knowing when we may once
more
Our readmittance gain: aye, there's the
hairball;
For if a paw were shaped to turn a knob,
Or work a lock or slip a window-catch,
And going out and coming in were made
As simple as the breaking of a bowl,
What cat would bear the household's petty
plagues,
The cook's well-practiced kicks, the butler's
broom,
The infant's careless pokes, the tickled ears,
The trampled tail, and all the daily shocks
That fur is heir to, when, of his own free
will,
He might his exodus or entrance make
With a mere mitten? Who would spaniels
fear,
Or strays trespassing from a neighbour's
yard,
But that the dread of our unheeded cries
And scratches at a barricaded door
No claw can open up, dispels our nerve
And makes us rather bear our human's faults
Than run away to unguessed miseries?
Thus caution doth make house cats of us all;
And thus the bristling hair of resolution
Is softened up with the pale brush of
thought,
And since our choices hinge on weighty
things,
We pause upon the threshold of decision.

Shakespaw



THE ANGLICAN CHURCH OF ST JOHN THE EVANGELIST, BALMAIN: 125TH ANNIVERSARY

St John's, Balmain (formerly Balmain North), was founded at a time of rapid change. The term of Frederick Barker as the Church of England's second bishop of Sydney coincided with the foundation of responsible government in the colony of New South Wales and the former privileged status of colonial Anglicanism was well in decline.

An unswerving believer in education as integral to the mission of the Christian Church, Barker championed retention of parochial schools in the face of popular growth of centralized government schooling. In 1859 and again in 1871, Charles Darwin's evolutionary theory spawned religious skepticism to the point where, by 1880, a battle for minds was high on the agenda of Protestant Sydney. Barker's counterpoises to the onset of secularism were three - recruit more clergy, construct more buildings, and mobilize laity in parochial organization. As the embourgeoisement of suburban Sydney expanded, Anglican laity became increasingly involved in financial activities and Sunday schools.

For medical recuperation, Barker left Sydney in March, 1881, for the Italian Riviera where he died 13 months later. At Balmain, the trustees of the estate of John Gilchrist were selling the last of peninsular land that had previously formed part of the original 550 acres which Governor John Hunter had granted his principal surgeon, William Balmain, in 1800. After the 1858 decision of Britain's House of Lords authorized Gilchrist's trustees to sell land still in their possession, accelerated subdivision and sale fuelled an increase in peninsular population which did not peak until 1915. A doubling of population occurred over 1880-82 (8,000 to 16,928). An estimated two fifths of these numbers were Anglican.

The Church of England had founded a church and parochial school (St Mary's) at Balmain in 1845 and in 1874 it founded another church and school (St Thomas's) at Balmain West. A privately owned Protestant cemetery had opened at Leichhardt in 1860.

True to Bishop Barker's policy, the genesis of an Anglican parish at Balmain North was a lay initiative. William Buchanan, who had moved his wife, Sarah, and 12 children, into Balmain in 1877, provided his Ballast Point Road home for weeknight services. Other nearby Anglican residents did the same. Before her premature death in 1880, Emily Elkington of "Cloverbrook" - a bungalow which still overlooks Snail's Bay - had conducted a Sunday school in Reuss Street. A former

quarry at Birchgrove Road and Spring Street was the site that was eventually acquired for a new Anglican church.

Edward Harman Buchanan (1859-1943, William's eldest son) had married Mary Sophia, daughter of neighbouring builder, Frederick Lemm (Lemm Street), in 1880. Buchanan (Buchanan Avenue, Birchgrove Park) became a practicing architect, local alderman, resident of Wharf Road, and, in 1888 at the age of 29, mayor of Balmain. He also designed the Balmain Town Hall. Civic-minded, Buchanan likely volunteered his services as architect of St John's.

William Macquarie Cowper, dean, archdeacon and (in the absence of the bishop) vicar-general of Sydney, laid St John's foundation stone on February 4th, 1882, and, by June 16th, the building, a square nave replete with north, south and west entrance porches and gabled belfry, was completed and licensed for public worship. Brown and O'Riordan had executed the church's brick and stonework and Williams and Clymer its timberwork. The enterprise cost £1,200.

St John's began as a chapel-of-ease attached to St Mary's and became a separate parish in 1883 with the Reverend Robert McKeown (1847-1936), one of Barker's Australian clergy, as its first minister. McKeown was likely responsible for introducing high churchmanship to worship at St John's (and in his later parish of St Mary's, Waverley). Despite the high turnover of clergy that characterized its formative years, the parish consolidated and expanded. A rowboat was provided to clergy for pastoral visitation to Cockatoo Island gaol, which continued to operate as late as 1908, and the nautical training ship, *Vernon*, which the *Sobraon* replaced in 1890.

The corrugated-iron roofed and weatherboard hall, which was first constructed where the rectory now stands, dates from 1884. Cyril Blacket had designed (and, as diocesan architect, later approved) an easterly extension to Buchanan's original church. This materialized in 1907. The younger Blacket had also produced drawings for a double-story commodious parish hall in an attractive art nouveau style that was presumably intended for construction facing Cove Street.

In 1917, archbishop of Sydney, John Charles Wright, dedicated the rectory, which was built at an estimated cost of £1,348, as a memorial to war dead. The style of architecture used resembles that of John Burchamp Clapp, who served as diocesan architect and designed numerous Anglican churches and rectories, particularly on Sydney's north shore. Clapp also produced an interesting design for a tower, intended to be constructed above St John's south (Thomas Street) porch.

During the interwar period, a lightning strike removed St John's belfry. In the postwar years, the original west porch was sympathetically enlarged and later the quatrefoil west window was - less than

sympathetically - enlarged and glazed in modern style. The church has two sets of gates, the carved capitals atop the pillars of the main gate being reputedly salvaged from the Immigration Building (demolished), which once stood near the Hyde Park Barracks. The second gate came from James McDonald's Wesleyan Methodist Church (demolished) that once stood on the north side of Darling Street, Balmain East. The pillars of this gate typify McDonald's interpretation of Gothic taste.

The atmospheric blight of coal dust from the nearby Sydney Harbour Collieries' mining operations which began in 1899, damaged St John's pipe organs and polluted the interiors of church, hall and rectory so frequently and extensively that, by 1928, abandonment of the site seemed the only viable option open to the parish. The mine's permanent closure in 1931 provided welcome respite.

Memorials at St John's are redolent of local and national history. Bronze chancel gates are forged from the turbines of the first HMAS *Sydney*. A pine-tree planted by Governor-General Lord Gowrie, shades the Spring Street footpath. The World War II honour roll includes the name of Patrick Hore-Ruthven, Gowrie's son, who died in Libya in 1942. Another plaque commemorates a special visit of Gowrie's royal successor, the Duke of Gloucester, in 1946. State Governor, Admiral Sir Harry Rawson, officiated at the opening of the 1907 extension. One of his successors, Air Vice Marshall Sir Philip Game, laid the foundation stone of the church's eastern vestries barely a fortnight after dismissing Premier Jack Lang. Another, Lt-Gen Sir John Northcott, unveiled three World War II memorials in 1948, of which one was a window depicting the crucifixion that local stained glass artist, John Lyon, had executed. The 25 year incumbency of the Reverend Arthur ("Cappie") Rix (1880-1953) witnessed 63 naval vessels launched at Cockatoo Island and Mort Bay.

The coloured glass of the chancel window commemorates Emily Elkington, whose husband, Albert, was a successful local auctioneer, agent, alderman and later mayor. The stone carved font, designed and donated by the architect, commemorates his son, Leslie Buchanan (1881-82). The stone wall at the entrance gate commemorates the 1919 Treaty of Versailles. Deloitte, Froude, Golding, Gooud, Hancock, Holcombe, Sharp, and Shirlow are among Balmain families that were prominent in commerce, politics, professions or trades and have names of members recorded in stained glass or other forms of inscription. A triptych and a painted banner were executed by young employees of Mort's Dock.

The entire St John's site is included in the State Heritage Register as an item of local heritage, having been gazetted as such in the Leichhardt Local Environment Plan 2000.

John Williams

Paradise Purgatory Hell Hole

by

Robert Irving

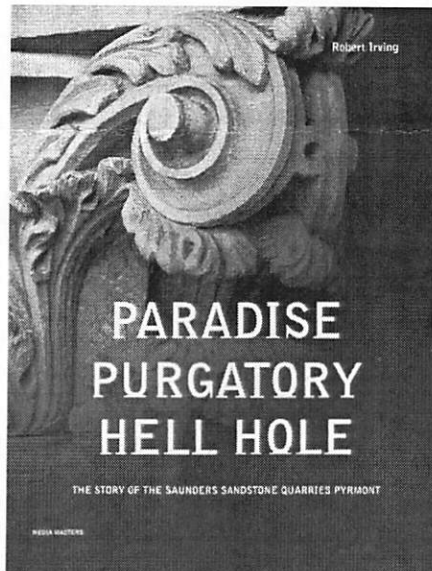
Media Masters, Singapore 2006

Bob Irving has, amongst other things, been a resident in Balmain since the 60s, a founding member and past president of the Balmain Association, an Architect and Architectural historian and now he is the author of *Paradise Purgatory Hell Hole*.

The book is the story of the quarrying and use of Pymont sandstone the finest "yellow block" in Sydney. It tells some of the history of Pymont through three generations of the most famous Sydney quarrying family, the Saunders, from their immigration to Australia through the end quarrying on the peninsula and beyond. Quarrying of Pymont's sandstone by the Saunders began in 1853 when Charles Saunders leased land on the north-west side of the peninsula and began digging out what would become some of Sydney's finest sandstone (Incidentally, in 1858, stonemasons working at the quarries and on construction sites were the first tradesmen to win the right to an eight-hour day.). When Charles's son, Robert, took over in 1880 the quarrying was extended further with the introduction of steam drilling. Quarrying in Pymont had ceased by 1930 though Robert's son, Robert Junior, and his brother, Charles, continued in the quarrying business in Bondi. The Saunders family quarrying enterprise ended in 1950 when the Bondi quarry was sold.

The Pymont sandstone quarries Paradise, Purgatory and Hellhole (named by the Scottish quarrymen who worked there in the 1850s and relating to the degree of difficulty in working the stone and its quality) were the three main Saunders quarries. Hellhole was located north-east of Wentworth Park on

Wattle Street and was so-named because of its depth and the fact that it filled to the brim with every heavy downpour. Purgatory was to the north, producing a very hard stone with a grey streak that could crack. Paradise, less than a kilometre north of Hellhole, produced the best stone, yellow block. These quarries shaped the early landscape of the Pymont peninsula and played a major role in its changing history.

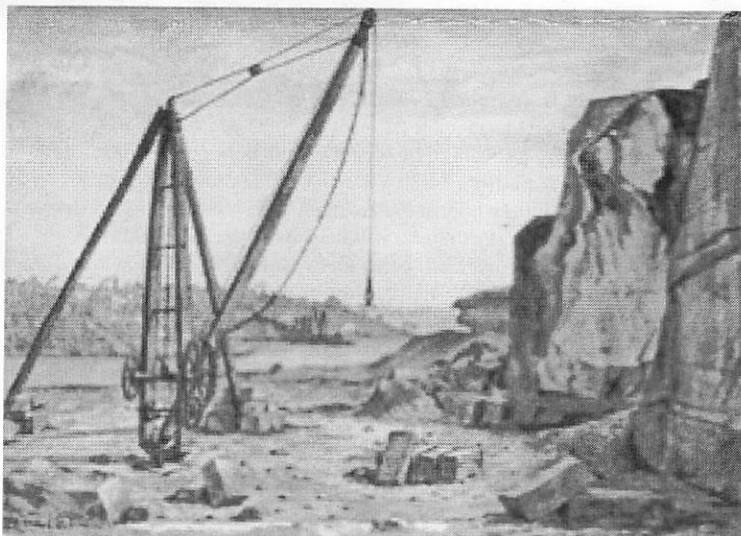


The Saunders family quarry business began its operation in Pymont at an opportune time. The gold rushes of the 1850s sparked a building boom, and Pymont was the source of some of the best building stone available. In 1850 the need to transport sandstone from the quarries led to the building of Pymont Bridge and the Darling Harbour railway lines.

Synagogue, the Art Gallery of NSW, the Mortuary Station at Redfern, the Australian Museum and Customs House are all made from yellow block sandstone (Even buildings in Melbourne and elsewhere in Australia were constructed or faced with yellow block.). The NSW Department of Commerce uses stone dug from the foundations of new Pymont developments to repair government buildings.

Robert Saunders described the importance of yellow block when he said, 'Strangers visiting Sydney are often struck by the magnificence of our public buildings, the richness of their ornamentation, and the mellow tone of their colourings. These effects are due mainly to the material used in their construction, as the freestone of Sydney lends itself to the art of the stone-cutter, and in the beautiful climate of this Southern Hemisphere its tone mellows and grows rich with age, and seems to absorb into itself some of the brightness of the sun.'

This is a fascinating book meticulously researched, beautifully written and amply illustrated with maps, drawings and photos in which Bob Irving also pays tribute to George Proudman OAM, a "master stonemason, lover of Pymont sandstone and remarkable gentleman", who in 1977, became leader of a small group of craftsmen responsible for maintaining and repairing government owned stone buildings, including the Balmain Watch House.



This watercolour of a Pymont quarry by A. Tischbaur, depicts steam cranes in the Saunders quarries on the north-western side of Pymont. Reproduced courtesy State Library of NSW.

Many older Sydney buildings are constructed from Pymont yellow block sandstone. Bob Irving's book also covers some of the history of these buildings. Sydney Town Hall, the University of Sydney, St Mary's and St Andrew's cathedrals, the GPO, the Great



Charles and Emily Saunders

What's on at the Watch House

SEPTEMBER

Saturdays and Sundays from 1 to 23 September

11:30 am to 4pm

Our Sandstone Legacy

An exhibition of photographs, maps and drawings of Balmain

Saturday and Sunday, 29 – 30

10am – 4pm

Opening Friday 28th, 5.30-8.30pm

Press Gang

Meadowbank Tafe Printmakers

Bronwyn Austen, Philippa Graham, Pauline Mulhearn, Annette Simpson, Rosanne Summerville, Julianne Tweedie and Kathleen Wootten

the press of modern life, correct the press, freedom of the press, favourably noticed by the press, good press, the gutter press, press-box, press cutting, press-gallery, press it with a stone, press the two plates together, press-button warfare, he pressed my hand, pressed her to his side, pressed beef, hard pressed, am pressed for space, press upon his mind, time presses, press for an answer

- from The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English

OCTOBER

BALMAIN ASSOCIATION ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

**The AGM will be held in the Watch House at 6pm on
Wednesday 3 October. Members are encouraged to
attend. Refreshments will be provided.**

**Any member of the Association wishing to nominate for
the committee, give their apologies or appoint a proxy,
should contact June (98106885) or Kathleen (98184954)**

Saturday 6 Sunday 7

Opening Friday 5th 5-8pm

"Journeys to..."

The POSIE Group expresses their artistic mission. Its members include Malama Arapoglou, Jenni Barrand, Fran Deady, Diana Fletcher, Jan Handel, Mareen Laphorne, Julie Percy, Sharon Tudor, Lisa Woolfe, and Wendie Patch. There will be a large variety of quality works and subject matter available at reasonable prices.

Fridays, Saturdays (10am – 5pm) and

Sundays (10am – 4pm) 12,13, 14 and 19, 20, 21

Opening Friday 12, 6 – 8pm

Original Fine Art Group

The Original Fine Art Group is a group exhibition of 11 women who meet at art school in Meadowbank quite a few years ago.

There is a variety of art that will be exhibited including paintings, sculpture, photography and printmaking.

Saturday 27, Sunday 28

10am – 4pm

Opening Friday 26th 6-9pm official opening 7pm

Fulfilment 2007

A retrospective exhibition by Trish Wade Quinn and her daughter, Bronwen Wade Leeuwen.

Trish and Bronwen held their inaugural mother and daughter

Exhibition at the Balmain Watch House in 1986 opened by Max

Germaine and continued to exhibit at the Watch House well into

the early 90s.

The works being exhibited come from inspirations from their recent travels in China and Europe particularly, Spain and Italy. Trish teaches Mo-ku watercolour techniques and Bronwen lectures on Eastern and Western painting techniques at Workshop Art Centre, Willoughby.

Moku Expressionists Australia

NOVEMBER

Saturday 3, Sunday 4

1pm – 5pm

Opening Friday 2nd November, 6.30 – 9pm

Nado Milat

Sydney (1967 – 2007)

Forty years of the artist's work including present works of Sydney Harbour, Kings Cross, Luna Park, Harry's Café de Wheels, in oils, indian ink and wash and mixed media. Other works include Balmain wharflies and 22 Balmain pubs, on loan, and early works of Sydney Harbour Bridge will be highlighted.

All locals have been welcomed in Nado's 15 years of exhibiting at the Watch House.

Saturday and Sunday 10-11,

10am to 5pm

Opening Friday 9, 6 – 9pm

Once again local artists Heather Kepski, Di O'Dwyer and Lynne Sung will be joined by artists Michael O'Keeffe, Roma Devjak, Wendy Lowe and other for a fantastic exhibition of new work.

The exhibition titled 'Hooked' will open on Friday Nov 9 and close on Sunday Nov 11. Don't miss out on your chance to procure works by these talented artists.

Saturday 17 and Sunday 18 (9am – 5pm)

Opening Friday 16 November 6 – 8 pm

Come and enjoy a drink with the artists! All welcome.

Deborah Harris, Jennifer Hartwick and Jan Farrell

are having an exciting new show of prints and paintings

Quality works at affordable prices will be for sale by these emerging artists.

Friday 23, Saturday 24(10am to 5pm) and Sunday 25 (10am to 4pm)

Opening Friday 6 – 8pm All welcome

Elke Wohlfahrt and Beverley Filmer

Beverley is a keen painter and printmaker and Elke is a painter

and sculpture. Elke is also currently furthering her studies at

SCA. They have had an annual exhibition together for the past 4

years. They anticipate presenting work by two very young

emerging artists ... yet to be confirmed.

DECEMBER

**Friday, Nov. 30. Saturday 1, Sunday 2 and Wednesday 5 to
Sunday 9 December 12 – 6pm.**

30:30 Vision

The Mosaic Association of Australia and New Zealand is holding its annual exhibition, 30:30 Vision. This Touring Exhibition begins its journey here at the Balmain Watch House. From this collection of works only 16 will be chosen to tour Australia's Regional Galleries. Our theme this year is 'INSECTS' either whole or part thereof. Works from around Australia & New Zealand will be on sale. Come and see where the new wave of artistic mosaicing is heading.

The Balmain Association Inc Representing Balmain, Birchgrove and Rozelle

Our aims are to:

Improve the living, working and recreational amenities of our area; maintain all features having natural, architectural and or historical value of the area and keep a permanent collection of historical interest; seek the cooperation of everyone concerned in the realization of the above.

The Balmain Association meets

on the first Wednesday of each month at 5:00pm in the Watch House, 179 Darling Street Balmain. The Watch House is open every Saturday from 12:00 – 3:00pm.

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Our Web site:

<http://balmainassociation.org.au>

Annual subscriptions:

Household \$20, Concession \$10,
Organizations \$30

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reproduced without acknowledgement**